UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Karen Kieser Prize Concert

Curated by Fish Yu

2025 University of Toronto New Music Festival
Reza Vali, Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition
Norbert Palej, *festival coordinator*

Monday, January 27, 2025 at 7:30pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

Beverley Johnston, *percussion*
Tiago Delgado, *clarinet*
Hirad Moradi, *piano*
KöNG Duo (Hoi Tong Keung, Bevis NG), *percussion*
Thomas Li, Bevis Ng, Hoi Tong Keung, Nikki Huang, Yeu Yin Zhang, Chi-En Wong, *percussion*

PROGRAM

Angels in Arches of Hildegard's Bingen

Julie Spencer

Beverley Johnston*, percussion*

Monologue

Luke Blackmore

I. Vocalise
II. ASMR
III. Anomia
IV. Recitative
V. Dialogos

Tiago Delgado, *clarinet*

Blue Johannes
*Canadian Première

Reza Vali

Hirad Moradi, *piano*

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

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a song for “V” from Dreams

Menelaos Peistikos

KöNG Duo (Hoi Tong Keung, Bevis NG), *percussion*

Intermission

Clockwork Recipe

Maria Mendes Martins

Adrift02

Hsiu-Ping Patrick Wu

KöNG Duo (Hoi Tong Keung, Bevis NG), *percussion*

Interview with Fish Yu

Joseph Glaser, Canadian Music Centre Ontario Director

The God of Cookery (2024 Karen Kieser Prize-Winning Piece)

Fish Yu

Thomas Li, Bevis Ng, Hoi Tong Keung,
Nikki Huang, Yeu Yin Zhang, Chi-En Wong, *percussion*

PROGRAM NOTES

Angels in Arches of Hildegard’s Bingen

Under war worn arches that echoed 900 years ago with music written and sung by Hildegard of Bingen, I rested one hand on the ledge of the cold stone one sunny afternoon, imagining her hand there long ago, and began writing"Angels in Arches of Hildegard's Bingen". The only remaining portion of her chapel, and now the centerpiece of a museum built around them, these low intimate arches were part of the abbey that Hildegard designed and founded. A prominent international figure of her time, born in 1098, Hildegard von Bingen was one of Europe's first natural scientists as well as being in frequent correspondance with powerful officials seeking her political as well as spiritual advice across Western Europe. She is called Saint in her religion and in the study of Western music theory, she is known as the first composer who was awoman.

Together with tuned meditation bowls, which can be quartz or bronze, the resonance of the vibraphone and optional improvised tuned gongs, the voice in this piece is not the voice of Hildegard's music. Its vocalizations represent the spirit of the music, steady throughout the centuries, curated in the memory of those arches, the atmosphere that surrounds us when we are moved by sound filled with meaning. Award winning international percussion soloist, performance artist, and Officer of the Order of Canada, Beverley Johnston asked me in our second collaboration to create music that would honor this remarkable woman of history. During the process of bringing this piece to life, I visited the village where Hildegard was born, not far from where I live in Bingen, and the tiny chapel on the hillside that still stands, where she went to services every week throughout her childhood. I looked up and discovered at the very center of the apex of the arched stones in the ceiling, a small relief sculpture smiling down on the people, the Christ figure in the Christian religion, depicted with a gentle childlike expression. I

imagined the little girl who we still talk about today, nearly a thousand years later, looking up at that smile, before she could understand Latin, the language of the religious services, imagining that God was smiling at her. Her writings, transcribed dreams and visions, leadership as an autonomous head of several abbeys as well as her detailed studies of nature and her music compositions are evidence of a mind and a spirit that were dedicated to living a meaningful life with enthusiasm, curiosity, and vision, with a notion of the center of her faith being a loving God, which she saw in the smiling face in the chapel of her childhood.

"Angels in Arches of Hildegard's Bingen" is an atmospheric journey reaching across time and cultures. The unusual shaping of lines with groupings of three and four notes and the unique contours of Hildegard's phrases were part of the inspiration of the piece. This music is also informed by the texture of the polyphonic improvised singing of the Babenzele tradition of the Aka/Bayaka people of the rain forests of Central Africa, which I am grateful to have been introduced to by recordings when I was young. One of the oldest known human cultures on Earth, their music comes from their understanding of their environment, in a real sense, singing with the forest. In 2003 the music of the Bayaka/Aka people was granted UNESCO World Heritage status. John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" resonates in this composition as well. The well known four-note bass line and melody of the chant in the "Acknowledgement" movement of the suite composed by the great jazz saxophonist, are echoed in the fabric of the polyphonic textures. Coltrane's orchestration of chanting, improvisation, repetition, and acknowledgement, also in the title of the movement of the suite, share a deeper meaning through the music, that points to a connection between the musical and the spiritual.

All of these elements inform the music of this composition, with the ancient, the medieval, and the modern, different cultures, ideologies, and times - representing our story, as musical souls, and as possible angels in the arches of our own places of peace. We are all and each of us, always and before, musical souls together on the Earth. Together on the Earth. Always together on the Earth. - Julie A. Spencer

Monologue

Monologue is a work for solo clarinet and electronics. The piece is formatted in short, highly contrasting movements which are brought together through their various ways of expressing human speech. Each movement is based on a different phenomenon involving the human voice, from wordless singing to the inability to recall words. It is dedicated to my mentor and friend, Christine Carter.

Clockwork Recipe

When first commissioned by the KöNG Duo, Clockwork Recipe had two main purposes to fill – to explore different perceptions of time (through the usage of the Vortex technique), and to create a cohesive concept for Hoi Tong’s third DMA recital, which contained both time elements-inspired pieces, and works featuring spoken elements in Cantonese.

As a result, every material in the following piece is generated from a single musical line, which is an approximate transcription of the Cantonese phrase “keh zup gai pa yi fun” (Chicken spaghetti in ketchcup/tomato sauce) – a dish recipe recited by HoiTong Keung, also used as inspiration for an earlier piece on the same program of her recital.

Adrift02

Adrift02 was composed for the KöNG Duo in 2024, this short piece about ocean waves is filled with phasing moments, serenity, and motivity. Adrift02 will later be expanded into a larger ensemble movement about the lost LEGOs on Cornwall beach, but I have always loved its original form and the sound of it with vibraphone and marimba.

The God of Cookery

The composer grew up in Hong Kong, where enjoying Chinese food, especially dim sum, was a cherished weekly routine. Wanting to share his favourite cuisine with audiences in Toronto, he composed The God of Cookery, a multimedia work inspired by the 1996 Hong Kong film of the same name, directed by Stephen Chow. Scored for six percussionists, electronics, and video, the piece blends dramatic and comedic elements that bring the music to life.

The music was composed for the University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble, featuring three Mandarin-speaking and three Cantonese-speaking performers. In the piece, the ensemble introduces a variety of Chinese dishes, reimagines iconic scenes from *The God of Cookery*, and performs on "percussion" instruments such as rubbish bins, iron pans, and glass bottles—everyday objects commonly found in a kitchen. These unconventional instruments, combined with electronic playback and video, create a vivid and dynamic soundscape that captures the essence of Chinese cuisine. The melodic and harmonic elements are primarily driven by the electronic playback, with synthesizer tones meticulously designed to evoke the nostalgic atmosphere of the film's era.

This multimedia piece not only pays homage to Hong Kong's vibrant culinary culture but also reinterprets it in a new context, offering the audience a unique and immersive experience through music, visuals, and storytelling.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Tsz Long (Fish) Yu is a Hong Kong-born composer and multimedia artist based in Toronto, whose work thrives at the intersection of music, technology, and storytelling. Fascinated by the fusion of sound, electronics, and visual elements, Yu's compositions often explore the dynamic relationship between acoustic performance, electronic manipulation, and immersive media. His creative voice is deeply rooted in personal experiences and cultural heritage, blending the mechanical sounds of urban life with rich musical textures.

Driven by a passion for collaboration, Yu has partnered with performers and ensembles across the globe. His music has resonated with audiences worldwide, with premieres and broadcasts on platforms such as Radio Television Hong Kong, Lithuanian National Radio, and at international festivals, including the Washington State University Electroacoustic Mini Festival and the International Computer Music Conference. His critically recognized works, like *Torrent* for Flute and Live Electronics, have earned awards including third prize at the Isidora Žebeljan International Festival (2021) and multiple international performances.

Yu's boundary-pushing projects frequently integrate video, lighting, and dramatic elements. His multimedia mini-opera *The Diary* saw him wear multiple creative hats—director, composer, sound engineer, co-conductor, and set designer—showcasing his versatility as an artist. His collaboration with KöNG Duo produced *Frolic*, a vibrant fusion of marimba, Mallet Station, electronics, Cantonese speech, and video, becoming one of his most performed pieces in North America. His latest large-scale

multimedia work, *The God of Cookery*, won the prestigious Karen Kieser Prize, further establishing his reputation for inventive and evocative compositions.
A dedicated technologist and producer, Yu brings expertise in surround sound and immersive formats. He produced *Sounds of Cities*, a Dolby Atmos music album for his master's thesis. He contributed to the Dolby Atmos recording project *Mystery of Clock*, collaborating with international artists led by Aiyun Huang and Mark Fewer. His live sound and media production credits span concerts and festivals, including live sound productions, live electronics creation and video production for renowned composers.

Yu's commitment to pushing creative boundaries continues to gain recognition. He was selected as a Composer Fellow for the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra's 2024-25 season and a composer fellow in Continuum's HATCH program. His work *Travelling Diary* toured Ontario. His composition *Cave* for Tam-tam and Live Electronics was showcased at the 2024 International Computer Music Conference in Seoul. He is now composing a new piece for Erhu and Live Electronics in the New Music Concerts "MAKEWAY 2025" program.

Currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Toronto, Yu continues to shape his artistic journey, merging tradition, technology, and personal narratives into engaging musical experiences that captivate diverse audiences.